

City of Somerville, Massachusetts
Job Creation and Retention Trust

Trustees

Thomas Bent
Vickie Choitz
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Thomas Galligani
Anika Van Eaton
Rand Wilson
Josh Grehan
Jesse Clingan

Minutes

Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust
Tuesday, January 12, 2020 at 6:00PM
Virtual meeting

In attendance: Tom Galligani, Tom Bent, Lisa Cook, Anika Van Eaton, Rand Wilson, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka

Meeting commenced at 6:00 pm.

1. Approve November 10 meeting minutes

- Motion to approve made by Tom Bent. Motion was seconded by Tom Galligani
- Motion was passed unanimously by roll-call vote

2. Updates

• **Urban Agenda Grant Application - High Road Kitchen**

Urban Agenda Grant is put out by the state for community driven responses to community-defined economic opportunities.

Application

- City of Somerville drafted the grant with High Road Kitchen and The Welcome Project. December 18th - submitted the application to the State. We authorized contributing \$100,000 from JCRT to match \$100,000 from State, pending award of the grant from the State. Total project funding would be \$218,000 (includes match from City)

Project description

- \$200,000 to work with eight immigrant-owned restaurants, each would receive \$20,000. Outcomes:
- Businesses would produce 2,000 free meals each to Somerville residents in need (identified by Shape Up Somerville and Somerville Economic Dev. Department)
- Business owners would undergo training and technical assistance in race and gender equity training and developing a business model to pay living wages to all employees.
- Would agree to raise all their employees to a living wage of \$15.26 an hour.

- Would provide the worker rights training JCRT is funding (would lead to another 40 workers trained in worker rights)
- 48 workers are retained or hired back, so would prevent losing jobs during COVID.
- Restaurants get \$15,000 upfront to do meals and training. Then get the last \$5,000.
- High Road Kitchens and Welcome Project would do the training.
- High Road provides the webinar modules and technical assistance.

Timeline

- Will find out if we get State grant in January.
- Welcome Project has already recruited half the restaurants.
- All needs to be done by June 30, 2021.

Questions

- Tom Bent: asked about HR training.
- Vickie: This training didn't have the full suite of Job Quality HR training we are seeking, a bit narrower.
- Rand: for workers rights training at the restaurants, who would they be training?
- Vickie: assume would mostly be the frontline workers. It's not spelled out in the grant.
- Rand: just wants to make sure that the workers rights training goes to the workers, not solely to management.
- Lisa Cook: family has restaurants in Roxbury. It is a family-owned business, which employed a lot of staff from Roxbury. During COVID, they've laid off all the staff, leaving the family member owners running it. Would imagine a lot of the staff left are family members, want to flag that there may not be staff around.
- Vickie: the restaurants will need to bring back some staff to cook the 2,000 meals, and these would be the folks who should get trained.

- **Subcommittee on Coops - report out**

Rand Wilson, Anika Van Eaton, and Jesse Clingon are on the worker co-op subcommittee. Anika outlined for strategies we might consider for supporting coops, including:

- Academy: schools for cohorts of folks who want to be coop entrepreneurs
- Incubation: organizers working with disenfranchised folks in an industry to organize a co-op
- Examples in Springfield and Cleveland
- Walk-ins: training the trainer
- Conversion: convert an existing business into a worker-owned coop, often as succession planning when owner retires

Barriers

- Knowledge - not a lot of folks know about coops or think about them. Outreach is important.
- Technical assistance
- Financial barriers to buying the business

Vickie asked the committee to share at the next meeting two pieces of information:

- Co-ops that already exist in Somerville - in what industries, how long they've been around, and what they do. Include coops who may have gone out of business. Candlewood Press (ESOP - publishing company)
- Who has their finger on the pulse of who would be interested in starting co-ops?

Tom G. comments:

- He loves the train the trainer idea. Lots of folks don't know starting a coop is even an option, folks might think of partnership, but not worker co-ownership in a larger groups.
- Think regionally: MAPC, co-op center in allston, coops outside of Somerville but in the region
- The City has catalogued co-op list in Somerville a few times - will share the list with us
 - Restaurant in Bow Market
 - Candlewick
 - Carpentry co-op in Union Square (moving)

Tom Bent: figure out if there's any interest in this especially now. Anyone starting a business now is going to be up against a lot of things. Would be up for seminars to inform people about worker co-ops, but doesn't want to fund starting a co-op. Tom warned of mission creep with the fund; keep focused on education, training, and employers; we should not wander into the business development space.

Vickie: Can see a case for supporting the development of coops that help solve a problem workers and employers in Somerville are struggling with, i.e., it would be interesting to support a coop providing affordable childcare, a much needed service for Somerville workers.

Next steps:

- Worker co-op subcommittee will share at the next meeting specific examples of each of the four strategies for supporting worker co-ops
- Will share concrete dollar amounts for each possible strategy
- Bring details on current co-op landscape in Somerville
- Bring ideas on partnership

- **New item:**

For the last couple years the City has worked with MassHire Metro North as part of a consortium training people in hospitality jobs (hotel and restaurants), related to the casino. Have contributed \$15,000 to this, and paid SCC to do outreach to find people for these opportunities.

Total of \$500,000 effort, paid mostly by Mass Gaming; the City of Everett has also contributed significantly since the casino is in Everett.

Tom Galligani decided not to fund this contribution this year from his Economic Development budget because he had to make budget cuts to focus on COVID response, and hospitality training seemed uncertain given the pandemic and economic shutdown, particularly in the service industries.

Boston, Medford, Revere, Lynn, Malden: participating and sending folks to training opportunities.

Training: about every year have trained five to ten people from Somerville. The specific number varies by training location, since transportation is a major issue for training

participants, e.g., when offered in Everett, fewer Somervillians trained because it's a stretch to get to.

Anika: asked about where folks are getting employed at the end.

Tom G.: that is also a question we need to get the answer to

Lisa Cook: \$15k goes from SCALE to MassHire MetroNorth for job support. MassHire would be getting money from JCRT for similar training/employment activity.

Tom G.: thinks we need to rethink the training for the hospitality industry.

Will have more details by the next meeting.

Rand: are the hotel unions partners?

Tom G.: not sure, I'll check.

Vickie: we funded customer service training with BHCC. Would be interested in how successful that program will be regarding job placement in customer service industries.

There may not be the demand for these types of jobs right now, and funding for training in that industry might not make sense.

3. Staffing the Board in 2021

- Tom G. explained that an internal candidate in his office has applied for the position vacated by Ben Sommer. If that person doesn't work out, Tom G. will post the position externally, along with the new junior workforce development position.

4. Discuss 2021 Investment Priorities

Category 1 discussion

HR training

Tom Bent:

His company is a member of Associated Industries of Massachusetts - Employers Association (AIM), and he saw HR training advertised. He saw examples of training: classification of employees, workers compensation guide, affirmative action, etc.

Could Tom G. inquire about these training sessions? They do a lot of training - could we work with them?

Could the Trust Fund pay for the dues for companies to become members in an organization like AIM in order to receive this training?

Job quality comment: Vickie indicated that she would like to see AIM's general HR trainings also include job quality practices, such as the importance of and how to provide stable work schedules for employees, ensuring the provision of work benefits including paid time off (now required by the state), the importance of and business models for paying living wages, etc.

Would be good to layer on high road employer practices onto HR training - could be a winning combination.

Tom B: lots of questions about the new family and medical leave laws are coming up. It's an area that we might be able to help out with.

The Board reviewed our current budget. One item is that we need to update the Job Quality training line item to reflect the \$100,000 we have authorized for the High Road Kitchen/The Welcome Project project if we get the Urban Agenda Grant. In total, we have now between \$200,000 and \$250,000 that we have not obligated.

Job Quality Training for businesses: Tom G.'s Economic Development office is currently at capacity bc have the \$5 million from the City to support Somerville businesses during the pandemic. When we have a new staff member, excited to have folks support business.

Lisa Cook has a former colleague at the State who trained the trainers on policies - will reach out to them.

Vickie: could there be a partnership between Union Square Main Streets and AIM on high roads + HR.

Tom G.: talking to partners, everyone is flat out just trying to keep businesses open. Everyone is still in “survival mode” with the pandemic and shutdowns.

Tom B.: it’s life support right now. Restaurants are closing. As Daddy Jones is saying, hibernating is too cute a word for what restaurants are having to do. It could be good to wait to see what is happening with our programs we are funding now, and we can see what’s happening. We could figure out these programs and hit the ground running in Q4.

Lisa Cook: some things are arisen during the pandemic. There is a need for an adult ed plumbing program in the evenings. Thinking we start at the end of the year, not sure when we will get into the high school labs.

Tom B.: Has been excited to maximize the use of the new high school labs and vocational space.

Lisa Cook: the opening of the labs will open up a lot of opportunities for students - youth and adults.

Tom Bent: would arrange a tour of the building if folks are interested.

Category 1 conclusion

Vickie: in conclusion, we want to break out category one into two different categories: (1) support the same programs/organizations we funded in 2020 (pending positive outcomes); and (2) support the same types of programming we supported in 2020 (i.e., contextualized adult education and industry-specific training), but possibly new organizations and programs (for example, the plumbing program).

Category 2 discussion

Rapid response

The Board discussed how to operationalize this specific idea, as it did not seem realistic to have an organization on retainer to deal with rapid response employment needs.

Conclusion: to rapid response:

- Ear mark X \$ in the Jobs Trust Fund to use in in a rapid response when need arises; and
- Train existing staff at key orgs on employment rapid response actions and activities (Key organizations include the City, the Chamber of Commerce, Main Streets, The Welcome Project, SCC, others)

Professional development for adult ed

Lisa Cook: there are trainings from DESE and through other providers for adult education professionals. Unsure where money will be coming from in the future. Seem to currently be a lot of training opportunities. Teachers are having a hard time with digital integration and teaching in remote classrooms - how do you differentiate to speak to different audiences. Not sure why they aren’t connecting to training that exists.

Vickie: let's leave on now, in case more need comes up, particularly for other types of educators and training organization staff.

F. Union Square High Road Employer Training

Should we make this less specific to Union Square Main Streets, and make it broader around job quality training? Could potentially layer on a job quality philosophy onto general HR training such as AIM’s trainings.

- Investment Purpose Statement

5. Adjournment

- Anika Van Eaton made a motion to adjourn.
- Tom Bent seconded the motion.

- Tom, Tom, Lisa, Vickie, Silvana, and Anika voted to adjourn.
- The meeting ended at 7:31 pm